

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES - 2007

The Department of Fire and Rescue Services consists of 141 uniformed personnel, 2 civilian employees, and approximately 32 non-paid volunteer personnel, who perform functions in 4 divisions (programs).

- Administration
- Suppression
- Special Services
- Emergency Medical Services

The mission of the Department is to:

Provide for the protection of life and property from the ravages of fire in the City of Reading, and to mitigate other life-threatening incidents through the use of modern fire suppression techniques, apparatus, equipment, rescue procedures, and delivery of emergency medical services.

Provide fire, rescue, haz-mat, and EMS services with the highest regard for the safety of all personnel.

Deliver fire, rescue and EMS services to all areas of the City within four minutes of notification, 80% of the time.

Administration: The Fire Chief has the overall management responsibility of the Department, with functions of various duties delegated in part to Deputy Chiefs, who are non-bargaining unit management employees. This management team, along with the Administrative Officer, provides administrative control of the Department and manages the activities of planning, controlling, operating and staffing to achieve the primary goal of the protection of life and property.

Fire Suppression provides fire protection, hazardous materials mitigation and rescue services 24-hours a day, responding to most areas of the City within four minutes, 80% of the time.

Special Services is responsible for fire prevention/code enforcement, training of career and volunteer personnel, and underwater rescue and recovery (Scuba Team).

Emergency Medical Services provides advanced life support and basic life support medical services to all residents and visitors in the City.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

The major challenge to the Fire Department will continue to be the provision of viable fire, EMS, haz-mat and rescue services, with a staff level that is less than national fire services standards set by ISO and NFPA. Vacant buildings, recurring problems with trash and rubbish accumulation, and general deterioration of structures place an increasing demand on service and resources, with greater risk to personnel. As a number of major fires increases, which quickly depletes the on-duty force, overtime costs increase as personnel are called back to duty to staff reserve apparatus to provide service to the rest of the City. In addition, more lost time injuries occur as apparatus staffed by two personnel attempt to perform evolutions that require the recommended four-person crew, resulting in more strain/sprain injuries.

PROGRAM 1: Administration

The Fire Chief has the overall management responsibility of the Department, with functions of various duties delegated in part to Deputy Chiefs, who are non-bargaining unit management employees. This management team provides administrative control of the Department and manages the activities of planning, controlling, operating and staffing to achieve the primary goal of the protection of life and property.

In addition to administrative duties, the Deputy Chiefs are each assigned to one of the four platoons, as required by a stipulated arbitration settlement, which mandates the assignment of the non-bargaining unit management supervisor to each platoon. In these functions, the Deputy Chiefs serve a dual role in administration and suppression. For budget purposes, they are carried as Administration. One Deputy Chief also serves as the City's Emergency Management Director. A Deputy Chief is also assigned to the Emergency Medical Services Division, to oversee the daily operations. The Administrative Officer serves as a confidential secretary to the Fire Chief, as well as duties relating to payroll, budget, purchasing, personnel and office management.

A clerk-typist serves a dual role for Fire Administration and Special Services. For budget purposes, this position is carried under Administration.

FY 2007 PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: PROVIDE AND MAINTAIN MODERN APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT TO ENABLE FIRE SUPPRESSION FORCES TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY, WHILE PROVIDING A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL PERSONNEL.

- Objective 1: Complete specifications for two new pumpers (Engines 1 and 14) to replace apparatus that are 11 and 19 years old, respectively. FY 2007
- Objective 2: Maintain and test all breathing equipment by factory authorized personnel, and (quarterly) testing of compressor breathing air for grade “E” quality by an independent testing firm; March, June, September and December 2007
- Objective 3: Continue a preventive maintenance program for all apparatus through a contracted diesel engine facility. FY 2007
- Objective 4: NFPA testing of two aerial trucks by a certified independent testing agency. June 2007
- Objective 5: Certified Underwriters lab testing of all first line pumpers. FY 2007
- Objective 6: Replace two Chief Officer vehicles (Cars 3 and 4, which will be 11 years old). FY 2007

GOAL 2: COMPLETE THE NEW FIRE STATION IN THE OAKBROOK (18TH WARD) SECTION OF THE CITY TO COMBINE AND REPLACE THE CURRENT OAKBROOK AND LIBERTY STATIONS.

- Objective The current Oakbrook station in the 600 block of Park Avenue was built 101 years ago by an independent fire company, when that area was part of Cumru Township. It was built for horse-drawn apparatus and cannot accommodate today’s modern apparatus. A new facility will combine this company and apparatus from the non-city owned Liberty Station at 5th and Laurel Streets, which is 131 years old, into one consolidated facility. FY 2007

GOAL 3: MAINTAIN AND RENOVATE EXISTING FIRE STATION FACILITIES TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THESE STATIONS.

- Objective: Continue to renovate and repair stations, which have suffered from years of neglect. FY 2007

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN STATE-OF-THE-ART COMMUNICATIONS AND DISPATCHING FACILITIES.

- Objective Continue to contract with the Berks County Communications Center for fire and EMS dispatching communications facilities to take advantage of enhanced 9-1-1, G.I.S., and computer-aided dispatch. FY 2007

PROGRAM 2: Fire Suppression

The Fire Suppression force consists of 109 uniformed bargaining unit personnel divided equally among four platoons, working 10-hour day shifts and 14-hour night shifts on a 3-day, 3-off, 3-night, 3-off, continuously rotating schedule. *A contractual agreement with the firefighters' union requires a minimum of 22 personnel on duty at all times (not including the Platoon Chief of Deputy Chief).* These 22 personnel staff 7 pumpers, 3 aerial trucks and one heavy rescue squad, responding to all fire and rescue calls, 24 hours a day. In addition, there are approximately 32 certified volunteer (non-paid) firefighters who respond to calls when available.

FY 2007 PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: THE PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF READING BY PROMPT RESPONSE TO ALL ALARMS, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGGRESSIVE FIRE SUPPRESSION AND RESCUE TECHNIQUES.

Objective 1: Overall response to 80% of alarms within four minutes. FY 2007

Objective 2: Reduce fire losses and civilian casualties. FY 2007

GOAL 2: INSURE THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF SAFETY POSSIBLE FOR ALL PERSONNEL ENGAGED IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS.

Objective 1: Reduce firefighter injuries by updating and reinforcing policies requiring proper protective clothing, use of breathing apparatus, P.A.S.S. devices, proper use of tools and equipment and safe driving procedures. FY 2007

Objective 2: Implement to the extent practical, NFPA 1500 and NFPA 1710 (the standards governing firefighting safety and staffing). FY 2007

Objective 3: Increase emphasis on the role of the Fireground Safety Officer by utilizing the Training Lt. and the Accountability System. FY 2007

GOAL 3: FINALIZE CERTIFICATION OF THE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TEAM AND ESTABLISHMENT OF RESPONSE PARAMETERS

Objective 1: Complete State (PEMA) certification process through the endorsement of the County Commissioners. FY 2007

Objective 2: Continue dialogue with County Commissioners and Berks Emergency Management relative to interfacing the career City Team with the volunteer County Haz-Mat Team. FY 2007

Objective 3: Establish dispatch and response procedures for haz-mat calls inside and outside the City. FY 2007

Objective 4: Maintain all firefighter haz-mat certifications at the operations level, as well as approximately 50 personnel at the suit-trained technician level. FY 2007

PROGRAM 3: Special Services

The Special Services program consists of three functions:

- Fire Code Enforcement and Education
- Fire Training
- Scuba Water Rescue/Underwater Recovery

The Lt. Training Officer conducts all Fire Department in-service training. Some related programs are also given to other City Departments upon request.

The Department Scuba Team is composed of off-duty paid personnel and volunteer firefighters, therefore requiring no personnel costs. The budget request is only for operating costs.

The Fire Prevention/Code Enforcement Division is responsible for all public education programs, building plan review, fire investigations, inspections, complaint investigations and fire code enforcement. The Fire Marshal and Fire Prevention Lt. carry out all these functions.

FY 2007 PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Fire Code Enforcement/Education

GOAL 1: ENHANCE LIFE SAFETY THROUGH A CONTINUING PROGRAM OF FIRE CODE ENFORCEMENT, INSPECTIONS, PRE-CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING RENOVATION PLAN REVIEW, SCHOOL FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAMS, PUBLIC AWARENESS PRESENTATIONS AND FIRE INVESTIGATIONS.

Objective 1: Continue to utilize the additional staff position Lieutenant, appointed in 2003, to generate more revenue by increasing number of inspections and resulting permit fees. FY 2007

Objective 2: Expand the use of fire suppression personnel in assisting with school programs, public awareness presentations, fire drills, alarm system tests, and standpipe certifications. FY 2007

GOAL 2: INCREASE ALL FIRE PREVENTION AND CODE ENFORCEMENT FUNCTIONS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A FIRE-SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE OCCUPANTS OF ALL PRIVATE AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN THE CITY.

Objective: The deterioration of some sections of the City, which is causing a proliferation of vacant buildings, places an increasing demand on the Fire Marshal's services with respect to investigations of incendiary and suspicious fires. Complaints and requests for inspections have also increased. FY 2007

GOAL 3 UTILIZE THE CITY'S PROPOSED GIS

Objective GIS would have significant value in pre-fire plans, depicting response routes, plotting fire occurrence trends, hydrant locations, underground utility lines and storm sewer routing and discharge locations into the Schuylkill River and Tulpehocken Creek. FY 2007

Fire Training

GOAL 1: PROVIDE IN-SERVICE TRAINING TO ALL CAREER AND VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL THROUGH THE READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND PROGRAMS DEVELOPED IN-HOUSE.

Objective 1: Utilize the reimbursement system available from the State through RACC to offset training costs. FY 2007

Objective 2: Provide specialized training using courses and instructors available through RACC. FY 2007

Objective 3: Continue to develop in-house training programs, including "virtual reality" Power-Point classroom tours of newly constructed and renovated buildings. FY 2007

Scuba Team

GOAL 1: MAINTAIN A SPECIALIZED WATER RESCUE AND UNDERWATER RECOVERY TEAM TO HANDLE WATER-RELATED EMERGENCIES IN AND AROUND THE CITY OF READING.

Objective: Provide adequate funding for training and the acquisition and maintenance of equipment needed to maintain a viable volunteer team. FY 2007

PROGRAM 4: Emergency Medical Services

The EMS Division was created January 1, 2001, to fill the void created by the departure of the City's private ambulance contractor, American Medical Response (AMR), who closed their east coast operations. A total of 29 personnel are dedicated to EMS. The Division is under the immediate supervision of a Deputy Chief (non-union), who was formerly the local director of AMR's operations. Three two-person paramedic units are staffed 24-hours a day, 7 days a week by 24 paramedics who work the Fire Department's four-platoon rotating work schedule. In addition, three wheelchair transportation vans are operated 5 days a week, with periodic weekend commitment that is shared on a rotating basis with the surrounding suburban ambulance corps. A full-time clerk/dispatcher handles all scheduling and dispatching of the wheelchair vans and the basic life support transport ambulance. The BLS routine transport ambulance is currently manned 5 days a week (10 hours per day) by firefighters and medics on overtime, in lieu of hiring full time personnel.

FY 2007 PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: PROVIDE ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT AND BASIC LIFE SUPPORT MEDICAL SERVICES TO ALL RESIDENTS AND VISITORS IN THE CITY.

Objective: Continue to achieve a response time of four minutes to most sections of the City 80% of the time, by combining the response of EMS and the closest fire suppression personnel to life-threatening medical calls. FY 2007

GOAL 2: MAINTAIN EMS FACILITIES (AMBULANCE BUILDING)

Objective: Maintain the EMS Building at 638 Walnut Street. FY 2007

GOAL 3: REVENUE ENHANCEMENT

Objective: Improve annual revenue by continued involvement and representation with the Regional EMS Council, state legislative committees, and the regional and statewide ambulance organizations. Continue litigation efforts to improve reimbursement service costs, particularly in the areas of Medicare, Medicaid and public assistance. FY 2007